Interreg Alpine Space

ASIS

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ASIS COUNTRY SPECIFIC PUBLIC POLICY GUIDE TO SUPPORT SOCIAL INNOVATION

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1. Introduction

While Social Innovation projects worldwide may have some joint specifics, they are nonetheless influenced by local and regional characteristics – the local politico-administrative environment, societal developments, geographical and environmental framework conditions. Thus, recommendations to enhance and foster Social Innovation projects always need to include a local perspective and have to be tailor-made for the local context.

2. Local Recommendations

The following elaborations represent policy recommendations that were developed by the partners of all project regions in their local and regional context. The development of the recommendations was undertaken with the help of various methods in a multi-stage, iterative process including expert interviews, workshops with stakeholders and discussions within the project consortium.

In the following, the derived recommendations as well as a short overview of the measure / good practice they are based on are presented. Finally, possible measures and actions are outlined and assigned to one of the three axes of cooperation that were developed in previous ASIS deliverables, and expected results are listed.

2.1 Austria

Through numerous and intensive consultations with stakeholders, online as well as offline, conversations took place in order to identify approaches, actions, initiatives and measures concerning various areas in the realm of Social Innovation. The findings from these elaborations were compiled and discussed with both external as well as internal experts in order to examine and further develop suggestions for improvements mentioned by the stakeholders, to formulate new recommendations and use present potentials on a local and regional level.

The overall goal of this approach is to examine the actual status quo and patterns of coping regarding different kinds of issues based on good practice examples, which, especially in the Covid-19 crisis, are increasingly of a socially innovative nature, in order to create recommendations. This is even more important as against the backdrop of general trends in Austria and the Alpine Space (e.g. demographic change, but also the recent crisis) there is a genuine need for recommendations how to foster and implement the idea of Social Innovation by the public sector and the overall society.

The following recommendations thus represent a combination of actions that have taken place in practice and that are – or can be – conducive to Social Innovation, reflecting the opinion of experts on the subject.
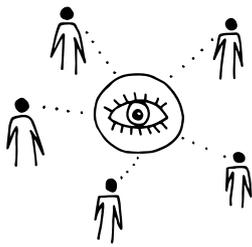
Recommendation 1:

Institutionalized linking of public and private networks to improve the access to public and private services for vulnerable groups and enable inclusive Social Innovations across the region

At the beginning of the year 2020, the public library of Spittal / Drau, which is part of the city's municipal administration, like most public institutions in Austria / Carinthia, was confronted with the question of whether and how it was possible to operate during the Covid-19 induced lockdowns, and how the provision of services could be maintained despite the existence of limiting policy measures to fight the pandemic, as e.g. contact bans and curfews. A particular focus of concern was the question of maintaining the safety of both employees and users, as the service is based on the principle of lending and sharing between customers. It was decided not to open the library to the public as before, but not to close it down either. Instead, it was decided to develop a package of measures that would allow the library to continue to provide its services without disregarding the difficulties delineated above. This is even more important against the backdrop of the importance of uninterrupted educational services for the overall population, but particularly students and pupils that may profit from the services provided by the library.

Administrative activities, such as the purchase of new media, and the recording and cataloguing of these media items, were made possible for the employees via the mode of home office by setting up a connection to the library server on private PCs. In this way, especially those employees who belonged to the risk group were able to do their work at home so as not to have to expose themselves to the risk of possible infection. For those employees who worked in the library building, strict hygiene measures had to be followed.

The lending of media was made possible by contacting the library through various channels. These include the telephone, e-mail, their website and their social media channels. Customers could borrow a «package» consisting of a maximum of 10 items, which the library staff put together. Together with the customers, a 15-minute slot was selected where they could enter the separate lobby of the library building. Disinfectants were provided together with the ordered package.

Especially in this period when parents were faced with multiple burdens due to childcare and the additional supervision of school activities at home, the library's "contactless media lending" was able to provide children's books and ga-

mes that did not have to be purchased by each individual. Parents were thus able to provide their children, who were allowed to leave the apartments less than usual, with new games, comics and books and to offer them variety of entertainment and educational input. This service was also used by children to obtain books and other research material for school projects, as university libraries and bookstores were largely closed.

After a certain period of time, networks also developed among the users. Citizens exchanged items, formed carpools and picked up packages for several families who were having difficulty in doing so themselves. This development is a typical example for positive snowball-effects of Social Innovation. Overall, the contactless media lending was a great success, received much praise and gratitude and meant that citizens had access to the library's services and that no employees had to be laid off or put on short-time work.

Another measure that was taken, not on a local but on a regional level, was the unlocking of certain paid services for the entire population in the federal state of Carinthia, for example the online library offer, consisting of e-books that can be downloaded at home. This supported social distancing, home and created an offer for groups from different socio-economic backgrounds that were already under financial pressure during the crisis, supporting also inclusive education.

Challenges

One point regarding these measures that has been critically observed, however, is that marginalized groups might have not been reached in some cases. A delivery service offered by the library was first considered in order to reach more groups, but could not be implemented. The idea would have been to make it easier to reach or people with limited mobility or the elderly, who may not know about the library's services because they are not reached through the – often virtual – channels used. The employees themselves addressed the fact that linking up different service providers would have been particularly useful in this period in order to reach these groups. As the discussion with internal and external experts showed, the linkage of public and private services through the development of networks and institutionalizing of cooperation would be beneficial not only in the area of education but also social services, to further facilitate socially innovative approaches to include and support vulnerable groups.

Axis of cooperation

Axis 3: Develop collaborative communities to support elderly and vulnerable groups

Actions

1. Identifying local and regional networks that have access to vulnerable or marginalized groups, to illustrate needs and potentials

2. Mobilizing and engaging local political decision-makers who support the process

3. Analyzing legal and administrative framework conditions and how these networks can be connected or what is missing in order for successful cooperation

4. Bringing together key representatives of private and public networks, public administration, and local politics

5. Engaging representatives of groups that need to be reached and allow them to participate in the policy process

6. Jointly creating policies using participatory practices

7. Raising awareness, communicating changes through different channels, making sure to reach marginalized groups too

Expected results

• Faster and more efficient reactions when problems and crises occur

• Improved outreach and inclusion of vulnerable groups

• Creation of sustainable networks that connect different actors from different sectors, creating increased added value
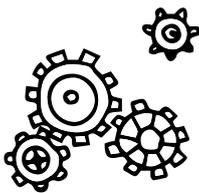
Recommendation 2:

Inclusion of Social Innovation in funding strategies in combination with transparent criteria for the promotion and support of local and regional businesses by development and funding institutions

Financial support and the creation of funding opportunities, providing information about these options as well as support in applying for funding are of great importance for the implementation of socially innovative projects and initiatives. The Carinthian Economic Development Fund (short KWF) is a regional institution for economic promotion and development that aims at strengthening the competitiveness of Carinthia as a technology and business location.

Carinthia has an R&D rate of 3.15%, which means that it is among the best 10% of regions in European comparison. However, this fact is not taken for granted, but is supported by efforts to sustainably develop the entire region. The KWF plays a supporting role, (co-)finances projects, advises companies and public

institutions and proposes strategies for the overall advancement of the region. The KWF's strategic orientation and focal points are reviewed annually in the form of a systematic strategy process with regard to their relevance and validity. In a next step, demand-oriented adjustments in detailed planning and orientation are made in order to adapt to current trends and needs. In particular, relevant EU framework conditions are taken into account in order to adapt to the current EU programme period to enhance the competitiveness of the region as a whole, and regional enterprises.

Challenges

While the focus in R&D so far has been mainly on technological innovation and progress, including the support of more technical innovation in this area, strategies for future periods will now include Social Innovation and support the principle of smart specialization. Social Innovation is not seen as an isolated point or a single goal to be aimed at, but is taken up as a cross-sectional matter in order to attract attention in all areas, which is considered to be an opportunity for economic as well as social development and growth. However, as pointed out by the experts, when implementing such measures, it is not only important to consider Social Innovation in one institution, but to do so across several in order to contribute to broader awareness. In addition to this, the connection of the implementation of Social Innovation as a focus has to be linked to clear definitions, criteria to be fulfilled as well as their transparent communication thereof.

Axis of cooperation

Axis 1: Strengthen local communities in the Alpine Space: promote development and livability in rural and mountain areas and promote regeneration processes in urban areas

Actions

1. Analyse previous funding strategies and criteria that need to be met in order to be funded

2. Create awareness of a broad definition of innovation, which sees Social Innovation as a new vision of innovation to move away from a primary focus on technological aspects

3. Involve experts on Social Innovation as well as business owners

4. Revise existing criteria for business and research funding to include these new aspects, if need be, include new criteria into legal frameworks

5. Reorientate the promotion strategy of economic development institutions and appropriate communication of these measures

Expected results

• Extended circle of beneficiaries
• Increased funding for Social Innovation projects or projects that have Social Innovation as a component

- Increased linking of local and social economy
- Increased awareness and spill-over effects into other areas, apart from business development

Recommendation 3:

Promoting social entrepreneurship at regional level through economic development institutions in order to create jobs that generate sustainable added value for society

The massive change and transformation in the way we look at work and the way it can take place that have been demonstrated by the Covid-19 crisis demonstrate all the more the need for social approaches in the facilitation of training in the labor market. The crisis offers not only negative aspects, but also opportunities, as it has broadened the scope for trying out new models and approaches.

Philosophies such as social entrepreneurship are becoming increasingly popular. Social entrepreneurs aim to combine entrepreneurial thinking with the creation of social added value through their activities and do not seek to maximize profits as their sole business goal. Social enterprises can be both nonprofit and for-profit models.

Many legal foundations and temporary regulations in Austria are aimed at securing the labor market and employment of Austrian citizens during this time. Nevertheless, it is important to take a broad view and concentrate on measures that not only support citizens and employees in the current situation, but also contribute to the future of employment with a view on job security and qualification issues, adapting specifically to the needs of vulnerable groups.

Challenges

As the exchange with experts on this subject confirms, it is essential to create training opportunities for those people affected by the crisis in order to counteract and prevent social disparities. In the regional and local context, social entrepreneurship is still a relatively underdeveloped concept in Austria and especially in Carinthia, compared to the other partner regions of the ASIS project.

Axis of cooperation

Axis 2: Develop new employment, occupation models and professional training, fostering inclusion of vulnerable groups

Actions

1. Mobilizing and engaging local and regional political decision-makers who support the process

2. Taking measures to raise awareness by communicating best practices through various channels and institutions

3. Creating a platform (e.g. online) that gives social entrepreneurs the opportunity to present their work and concepts and to exchange ideas with each other

4. Providing information about possibilities of financial support as well as advice on how to become active in this field

5. Creating educational and training opportunities for potential entrepreneurs as well as for politics and administrations

6. Providing guidance and information e.g. about labor market related issues and recruiting (legal and administrative procedures)

7. Using local media, which reach a large audience especially in rural areas

8. Using good practice examples, national as well as transnational, in order to benefit from common learning effects and to strengthen the Alpine Space as a whole economically

Expected results

- Growth of the social economy sector, increased number of ventures in this area
- Improved recognition of social entrepreneurs
- Improved inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups in the labor market
- Mitigated negative effects of the Covid-19 crisis
- Strengthened response to youth unemployment and rural economic revitalization

Outlook Austria

Although being still underdeveloped in some aspects, especially in rural areas, there are some starting points to support Social Innovation in Carinthia through policies and thus meet economic and social challenges. In general, an increasing political will to implement measures and policies to strengthen Social Innovation can be noted. Nonetheless, especially in the local context, increased strategic support is needed to create beneficial conditions in which further development of the concept can take place and socially innovative projects, initiatives and business endeavors can strive. In particular smaller public bodies, e.g. in rural environments, need support as resources as well as awareness for Social Innovation is still limited. For this reason, the formulated recommendations refer in particular to the development and maintenance of networks, capacity building and the creation of awareness in order to increase acceptance in various stakeholder groups.

2.2 France

French partners of the ASIS project, that are all part of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, have been working on those recommendations to offer public actors and especially local authorities an occasion to understand better Social Innovation on their territories and give them practical recommendations to facilitate its implementation in their strategies.

Carrying out a territorial approach to Social Innovation, whether we initiate it or we pursue it, is far from being a linear process or a universal recipe! That is why those actions suggestions are related both to internal efforts and external actors support. In other words, a local authority wishing to support Social Innovation can tackle this issue with those two complementary ways:

• Integrate Social Innovation into its own approach, projects, public policies. Then we talk about public innovation and this will involve new methods, ways of working with stakeholders, new forms of governance...

• Actively support Social Innovation on its territory and the large ecosystem of actors that carry them out through facilitating public policies.

The following recommendations have been built with the help of different stakeholders benefiting from the knowledge they hold. It has been a back and forth work, to adjust them and make them match as closely as possible to the vision and needs of field actors. They are the result of all the ideas and knowledge gathered through workshops led by ASIS partners that offered a time to exchange with local stakeholders and experts about Social Innovation, working times with the internal technical committee in the Isère Department (French local authority) and the analysis of already existing work about Social Innovation and public policies.

As the following are focusing on transversal subjects, it is to mention that all three axes of cooperation are relevant regarding the French recommendations:

• **Axis 1:** Strengthen local communities in the Alpine Space: promote development and liveability in rural and mountain areas and promote regeneration processes in urban areas

• **Axis 2:** Develop new employment, occupation models and professional training, fostering inclusion of vulnerable groups

• **Axis 3:** Develop collaborative communities to support elderly and vulnerable groups
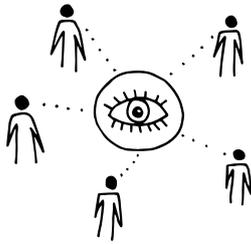
In order to analyse the needs on the territory they operate, public actors should carry out a shared diagnosis of the unmet social and environmental needs of the territory at the local level.

A Social Innovation develops new responses to a need that is poorly or inadequately met. To qualify and specify these needs, the Social Innovations actors (social entrepreneurs particularly) use not only national data or societal trends but also feedback and enquiries from beneficiaries, at the heart of the Social Innovation construction process. In both cases, these data provide an imperfect picture of needs at the scale of the territory concerned.

These data are still little cross-referenced with available public data: territorial diagnostics (demographic and socio-economic data), data produced by thematic observatories carried by the various public actors (housing, air quality, agriculture, employment, etc.). Also, these public data are sometimes not widely shared with stakeholders and are difficult for entrepreneurs or citizens' groups to understand.

Challenges

Collaborative diagnosis can allow stakeholders from different backgrounds on a specific territory (inhabitants, public and private actors) to build shared knowledge and identify relevant issues and local specificities. By organising a dialogue between stakeholders around needs that are currently little or poorly met by existing public and private solutions, public stakeholders can contribute to the emergence of solutions adapted to the specific social and environmental needs of the territory.

Before being able to act in any way through Social Innovation, it seems crucial for any actor, public or not, to be aware of the specific needs that its territory is facing to focus on those challenges. Then, a collaborative diagnosis is a way to involve relevant actors in the public data collecting while allowing a spreading of this data. At the scale of its territory, it is important to mention that a public actor can truly play a role in the sharing and dissemination of these data as well as in the regular updating of them with the actors, in relation to the challenges of the territory, concerning social or environmental needs.

Actions

1. Carrying out a diagnosis of the territory's needs, which requires specific expertise

2. Working in cooperation with all the actors, especially the inhabitants, on the

needs of the territory in order to collectively propose adapted, coherent and feasible responses, within the framework of cooperation between the actors[1]

3. Widely sharing the results (several local authorities have initiated «open data» initiatives to open and make available data concerning their territory)

Expected results

- A shared knowledge is built thanks to the diversity of actors on a territory
- A diagnosis of the territory is gathering all types of data in one place by cross-referencing
- Unmet social and environmental needs of the territory are clearly established and known by local players
- The data collected is open and easily accessible to anyone interested in
- Project leaders of Social Innovation projects are helped, especially in the starting phase, to build their project in coherence with better qualified needs, thanks to localized data
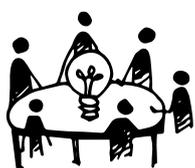
Recommendation 2:

Build a network of Social Innovation ambassadors within public institutions

The lack of cooperation between private actors, leaders of Social Innovations, and public actors is partly due to the lack of communication and the frequent difficulty of private actors to get in touch with the public sector. Facing the complexity of the organisation of the fields of competence and the lack of clear entry points or identified personal contacts, leaders of ideas or projects, entrepreneurs or committed associations encounter difficulties in accessing the public actor other than through the traditional call for proposals or grant application.

The need of Social Innovation actors can be simply about need of information, understanding the public policies and local master plans, having feedback on their project to improve it... The requests of social entrepreneurs in the construction phase of a project can sometimes be incompatible with the organization and decision-making circuits of the public administrations. Therefore, identifying "referents", aware of the economic constraints and short deadlines of those acteurs, could facilitate the encounter with the public system and avoid them getting discouraged too quickly!

The functioning of public organisations, often compartmentalised into silos that communicate little with each other, also represents a barrier to Social Innovation and cooperation between actors. Indeed, once communication is established with the public actor, the Social Innovation actor comes up against a culture and an organisation that struggles to deal with their eminently cross-cutting requests. Territorial organisation and the distribution of competences between

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[1] To go further on the methodology, public actors can use existing tools, such as : www.diagnostic-territoire.org (in French)

local authorities are often unclear or incomprehensible to most citizens and project leaders.

Challenges

Public actors should establish a network of ambassadors, within their institution, with civil servants from different services, to facilitate the link between the administration and the actors. Their mission as «referent» would be to welcome the requests of social innovators (questions, need of data, presentation of their project...) and accompany Social Innovation projects in the complexity of the administration, in order to facilitate exchanges and cooperation. This network within each local authority could become an inter-institution network at the territorial level.

➜ Allowing direct interaction and guaranteeing exchange, giving answers as far as possible, is already a way of supporting these actors and the future Social Innovations they bring, at the service of the territory.

➜ Appointing people responsible for supporting and promoting the cross-cutting nature of projects within the public administration would allow them to better respond to the specific nature of these projects and to ensure a real follow-up.

➜ Extending this network to other local authorities would be a means to orientate requests to the proper public authority while ensuring its follow-up.

This recommendation must be completed by working on the position and state of mind of the structure (public innovation) in order to make cooperation and transversality collectively shared and intrinsic values of the structure.

Actions

1. Identify in the institution the departments most likely to be concerned by Social Innovation: employment, housing, autonomy, education, youth and family, culture, agriculture and food, mobility, energy, environment...

2. Acculturate to the topic, to the importance of Social Innovation projects as answers to the needs of the territory as well as to the importance of transversality between services and cooperation between actors

3. Identify the allies in each department concerned in order to set up a network of ambassadors

4. Define their missions: they should be simple and not time-consuming. They can also be quantified: 1 hour/week, 1 day/month...

5. Formalize the network as well as the mission of each person in his or her job description

6. Communicate on this network and the main contact person. Make visible and accessible (on the website for instance) the contact details of a physical person (and not with something impersonal as a contact form) and the existence of this network of ambassadors

Expected results

• The communication between public and private actors is made easier through a better identification of key actors and contact persons

• The access for social entrepreneurs to information about Social Innovation and policies conducted about it is fostered

• Direct interaction is allowed and exchange is guaranteed and answers are given to who is looking for them

• People responsible for supporting and promoting the cross-cutting nature of projects within the public administration are appointed

• In the middle term, the network is extended to other local authorities

• A better response to the specific nature of these projects and a real follow-up are noticed

Social Innovation actors know:

• How to exchange with a local public actor to better understand the territory

• Which actor to contact in case of a request

• They can have feedback on their project, initiative, approach, etc.

• They have the opportunity to cooperate and work with local public actors

• Having a cross-cutting project that does not fit into the «classic» scheme of public organisation and implies several services or several public authorities is not a problem anymore

Recommendation 3:

Launch cooperative, participative and cross-disciplinary calls for proposals

The answer to complex problems requires the sustainable cooperation between actors at local level. The establishment of territorial cooperation dynamics contributes to respond collectively to complex problems and to create a culture of cooperation that favours the emergence of Social Innovations.

The main obstacles to cooperation between actors are often a lack of inter-knowledge and the logic of sectorisation. A cooperative call for proposals favours the cooperation of actors at the service of a response to answer the needs of a territory, rather than competition between actors to obtain public fundings.

This could allow and stimulate a better knowledge and understanding of the logics and needs of the actors, in a "supervised" framework. Also, in the construction of the response, a new form of cooperation and response (Social Innovation) can emerge. These specific forms of cooperation can prefigure the emergence of collective territorial dynamics and eminently socially innovative projects.

Finally, crossing several topics and several competences stimulates the inter-knowledge, allows to break down the barriers between internal services of public authorities or between different public authorities that do not have the same competences, and can incite actors to build innovative partnerships.

Challenges

Favouring cooperative (build collectively), participative (open to people's vote) and cross-disciplinary (housing and food / mobility and short circuits...) calls for proposals is a way to encourage Social Innovations projects on a specific territory.

Before launching an open and participative call for proposals, public actors should first pay attention to the collective building process of those. The idea is to ensure that the proposition made in the first place is coherent with the reality (crossing points of view on the identified needs), it is well understood (to avoid incoherent applications and loss of time), that social innovators can respond to it and access the fundings (criteria).

Actions

Build collectively the calls for proposals:

1. Launch a call for expression of interest, with the outlines of the ideas and the broad objectives defined (why launch a cooperative call for proposal, how does it work, which kind of actors are looking for... ?). Many examples exist online, take a look at them!

2. Build these cooperative calls for interest and the future calls for proposals with other funders actors: other public actors, or with private actors (company foundations for example) in order to encourage upstream cooperation in the identification of the territory's needs and build a multi-fundings call for proposals.

3. Get together with the actors who showed their interest in the call for expression of interest, in order to work with them on the identified needs, the purpose of the call, the criteria...

4. Encourage the actors to work together to answer the call for proposal with collaborative and cross-disciplinary projects (that can also become a criteria to select projects).

Launch open and participative calls for proposal:

1. Launch an open call for proposals on a territory, with broad criteria: so many ideas and innovative projects can emerge!

2. Organise an open public presentation of the projects so the project leaders can present them publicly, discuss and debate with the audience (inhabitants, association, public or private actors...) to enrich and improve the projects or to merge similar ideas or initiatives

3. Examine the projects with a cross-disciplinary team (financial feasibility, technical proposition, juridical status...) and select some of them

4. Put the selected projects to the vote of the inhabitants (physical or online)

5. Officialize the final selection of the projects and... let the projects get started!

When the call is launched:

1. Financially support the design and project development phases (incubator, agency development, dedicated organizations...)

2. Value the time spent in responding to the call by supporting some of the shortlisted candidates to give them the means to progress in the design and/or implementation of their projects up to the selection phase

3. Support not only the winners but also several candidates / projects by financing the design and project development phases of the non-selected projects

4. Include in the project analysis grid the consideration of multi-partner governance coordination

Expected results

• Public, private and associative actors join forces with each other to create innovative projects.

• Criteria are adapted for Social Innovation projects so that project leaders do not struggle anymore to answer to "classical" calls for proposals

• The social innovative projects that emerge are more accurate and coherent with the needs of the territory and then directly benefit its inhabitants and the whole territory
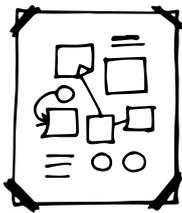
Recommendation 4:

Systematize the criteria of societal impact and governance in classical innovation financing tools

When it comes to mobilise fundings, the societal impact and governance criteria should be systematic for public actors to rely on, especially with classical innovation financing tools which so far are not taking those social criteria into account.

In France, numerous actors and mechanisms coexist, whose intervention logics are not always clear and coherent. Innovation support policies for enterprises are based on three types of mechanisms:

• Direct support schemes: grants, loans and equity participation

• Human capital development (ie: CIFRE system) and cooperation between actors (competitiveness clusters)

• Indirect tax incentives and reductions in social benefit charges: mainly through the Research Tax Credit (CIR in French, which alone accounts for 60% of the amounts), the Innovation Tax Credit (targeting SMEs) and the Young Innovative Company scheme.

Public intervention through policies supporting classical innovation has traditionally not been linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Regions (as is the State) are key actors in this intervention through the implementation of regional innovation strategies and regional economic development, innovation and internationalisation schemes (SRDEII in French) in consultation with the municipalities. The SRDEII integrates the priorities for social and solidarity economy.

Public intervention usually aims at encouraging private investment in R&D (in order to reach optimal levels), at developing cooperation between actors (by reducing barriers to technology transfer, for example), at increasing the economic spin-offs of public research (higher education establishments and research organisations), at promoting innovative entrepreneurship and to support the development of innovative companies.

The expected repercussions (measured in the evaluations of the various schemes) are mainly the development of competitiveness of French companies in the domestic or international market, the number of patents filed, and possibly job creation, but aim more rarely at improving the environmental or social impact.

Challenges

Facing the importance and urgency of environmental and societal challenges, all economic and research actors should be encouraged to integrate these issues at the heart of their development strategy and their innovation and R&D projects.

As well as the movements of impact finance and socially responsible investment are shaking up the analytical grids of private funders, the public policies supporting classical innovation could get inspired by the existing Social Innovation analysis grids to question all the R&D and innovation projects they support.

Actions

1. Integrate societal and environmental issues, both general and specific to the territory, into the development strategy

2. Integrate sectors that address those issues, into the innovation strategy, with sustainable objectives (renewable energies, circular economy, sustainable food, responsible consumption...)

3. Encourage economic actors in the territories to develop innovations that respond to targeted challenges and to social and environmental needs not covered

4. Encourage economic actors to develop innovations involving beneficiaries, users and other stakeholders

5. Include criteria/objectives of shared governance, co-responsibility in the application files

Expected results

• Economic and research actors, including those that are not used to tackle

social and environmental issues, integrate these issues at the heart of their strategy, innovation and R&D projects.

• Public policies are supporting classical innovation by getting inspired from Social Innovation criteria to evaluate innovative projects

• Sustainable Development Goals are taken into account when it comes to support or not a classical innovation project

Outlook France

Nowadays in France, innovation is mainly considered as classical (in the technical way) and so are the fundings selection criteria regarding innovative projects. However, a lot of initiatives focused on Social Innovation are already emerging even if financial amounts involved are not comparable yet.

The following step for French public policies now is to know, understand and support those new models of innovation, whether it is supporting Social Innovation projects or including societal criteria in the selection of classical innovation projects when it comes to fundings.

Social innovators fundamentally need help from public policies to be able to disseminate their good practices to a large scale and tackle societal and environmental issues the world is facing today. The challenge is also to widen the ecosystem of Social Innovation and to take on board the traditional technological innovation players.

2.3 Italy

The following 4 recommendations have been identified after meeting (online and offline) internal and external experts with local stakeholders and partners already involved in Torino Social Impact, the local ecosystem for Social Innovation in Turin.

A focus on existing programmes, projects and activities already entirely, or at least partially developed, has been the starting point to come to these general recommendations that need real cooperation between private, public and third sector bodies. The recommendations start from good practice examples and local propositions that local experts and stakeholders that foster and implement the ideas and the actions based on Social Innovation could at the same time meet social needs already existing and increasing during this period of Covid-19 crisis. The pandemic impacted on economic, human and social capital with a rarefaction of relationships and a decrease of internal trust in the communities, with the further marginalization of the weaker categories. Social Innovation will be only one of the key factors for dealing with this situation, but surely this pandemic has highlighted some elements that are salient in order to be able to mitigate, counter and prevent similar situations.
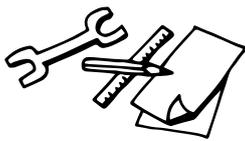
Recommendation 1:

Develop new economic and labour policies and programmes based on social impact

Monitoring, evaluation and impact measurement are the tools needed to demonstrate the concrete progress that can be achieved through Social Innovation projects, to promote a better understanding of what has been done and to improve governance models. Measuring social impact is a complex issue that has shown limitations and critical areas for lack of alignment of approaches and methodologies, lack of specific skills and professionalism to ensure neutrality in the assessment process, for the unavailability of suitable measurement data.

Public policies have the task of filling this gap by stimulating the growth of the ecosystem through actions that:

- Promote the creation or development of entities with independent third party characteristics that act as an intermediary for measurement
- Provide tools for directing the participatory process of defining measurement standards and promote their dissemination, for example through the renewal of their procurement systems that include criteria for measuring social impact
- Promote the construction of databases adapted to the needs of impact measurement and invest in the open release of public data (with features of homogeneity, interoperability, standardisation)
- Promote public intervention on the theme of social inclusion, poverty and marginality - living emergency through Social Innovation actions

In Italy some experiences are now at work, and the City of Turin, following a call from the Social Innovation Fund promoted by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, has decided to deal with housing emergencies using new policy tools. The national call was addressed to municipalities and metropolitan cities, for the selection of experimental projects of Social Innovation within a three-year programme, aimed at strengthening the capacity of public administrations to promote new models and approaches for the satisfaction of social needs, also with the involvement of private sector actors. Torino won the first selection phase, thus developing a project in partnership with local stakeholders, including the Chamber of Commerce, banks, private individuals and social enterprises. The funded project has been divided into three distinct phases and interventions lasting one year each, which included a feasibility study, experimentation and systematization, and replicability of the project.

Homes4All project was born from a simple observation: the paths of poverty very often begin with the loss of one's own home. In fact, with the loss of one's home begins a progressive worsening of the economic, social and psychological conditions of those affected, with very high costs for people, families and the whole community.

The project thus wanted to promote a new social housing service strategy through the identification of all properties, free or occupied, from both judicial procedures and other sources - unused apartments or ad hoc donations. In addition to this, the project provided for the intervention on the housing dynamics of tenants in order to promote the creation of participatory, collaborative and inclusive housing mechanisms.

The overall management of the properties - both those coming from private individuals and those purchased on the real estate market or from judicial auctions - was entrusted to a special purpose vehicle company, capable of providing services oriented in two directions: in the case of vacant property, it provided for the renovation for resale or inclusion in the social rental channels; in the case of an occupied house, it was responsible for removing the debt situation of the occupant who would resume to pay a calm rent.

This model could guarantee the satisfaction of emerging social needs, according to the impact finance scheme. Through this project partnership, the PBR (paying by results) scheme and the impact finance instruments are followed. In fact, the architecture of the intervention envisaged a complex partnership structure with different roles and tasks:

- The Municipality: the beneficiary and facilitator of the project
- The service provider: the entity that implemented the solution identified with the feasibility study on an experimental basis
- The investor or private financer: the entity that acted as advisor to acquire the information necessary to finance the scalability of the experimentation
- The evaluator: the entity that supervised the system of measurement and evaluation of impacts
- Other partners: entities that entered into different phases of the project

Challenges

- Intentionally producing positive social impacts
- Simplifying funding and investing in governance
- Develop new economic and labour policies based on social impact
- Develop a new model of entrepreneurship where social impact is the foundation of the enterprise strategy

Axis of cooperation

Axis 2: Develop new employment, occupation models and professional training, fostering inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Actions

1. Stimulate local authorities to plan, innovate and use new tools

2. Experiment with innovative models for the public actor and capacity building of public administration personnel

3. Adopt the principle of circular subsidiarity to commit all actors in the territory (public administration, private economic and civil society actors) to take responsibility for contributing to the common good

4. Involve private capital to meet social needs

Expected results

- Faster and more efficient reply to social needs
- Improved outreach and inclusion of vulnerable groups
- Create sustainable work
- Use public resources in an adequate way

Recommendation 2:

Build and sustain a supporting environment for Social Innovation

An ecosystem for Social Innovation is composed by all of the actors and factors that allow the development of Social Innovation within communities and that is realized and strengthened through the adoption of integrated and multidisciplinary approaches and careful policies of public and private entities. It must be able to provide the means and opportunities to the local community to bring out the most appropriate solutions to meet its needs. Public authorities must invest in the promotion of the Social Innovation ecosystem and to do this, the tools to support policy makers are:

- Resources: financial capital, human capital, infrastructure and networks to structure processes
- Services: understood as the set of solutions to address the social needs of territories

- Processes: set of activities necessary to build and define the solutions and modes of intervention

Through this combined use of elements, it is possible to support an ecosystem favourable to the development of Social Innovation policies and able to facilitate the emergence of innovative markets, to support and develop community participation networks in Social Innovation policy-making, to strengthen study and research activities for Social Innovation and impact measurement, to help strengthen legislation on these issues that is more flexible and appropriate.

Torino Social Impact (TSI) is the local transversal alliance of 100 subjects of the territory united now after Covid-19 crisis for a new model of inclusive development for the city, in the framework of the European debate for recovery, in which the social economy will play a key role on a par with more traditional industrial and economic ecosystems.

There are already some private and public interventions, also physical, with the objective of re-functionalization of dismissed buildings site in a peripheral urban areas creating places for innovation, transforming abandoned industrial buildings in a pole of innovation, capable of creating a critical mass that could increase the capacity of the local system to generate new entrepreneurship and attract investments in the territory. In Turin, the first experience where the property is public and the management mixed is *Open Incet*, from the 2017. It is both a physical and a virtual space to foster the connection between ecosystems for innovation at local and international levels, aiming to become an intersection point between different realities, in which to develop a common language between public and private, between innovators and consolidated companies and increasing the potential of social and technological innovation of the territory.

In order to pursue these goals, public-private partnerships are needed and necessary with the objective to generate innovative ideas and solutions, applying multidisciplinary approaches, exchanging and contaminating social, economic and technological knowledge. A territory that builds and sustains communities for innovation (physical and not) raising the awareness on frontier issues related to the digital and technological world and Social Innovation.

Challenges
- Engaging and connecting stakeholders
- Simplifying funding and investing in governance
- Developing innovation centers rooted in the territory strengthening the community through ideas, skills and practices on the theme of work (co-working spaces, incubator, accelerators, open lab, training and research)

Axis of cooperation
Axis 1: Strengthen local communities in the Alpine Space: promote development and livability in rural and mountain areas and promote regeneration processes in urban areas.

Actions

1. Create places of innovation or collaborative spaces (physical and not) dedicated to new models of encounter, contamination, and co-design between the different actors of an innovation ecosystem (companies, non-profit organizations, public bodies, private citizens, etc).

2. Propose an innovative model through broad governance of those who know the dynamics and the local issues, of entities who carry an external vision, encourage contamination between different realities; ensure a wide range of skills and the provision of long networks, encouraging and implementing new forms of local development.

3. Build physical spaces in peripheral areas to experiment and develop technologies, services, and business models which at the same time benefit from the direct participation of citizens within a collaborative framework generating new solutions to community problems.

4. Identify and connect Social Innovation actors in sustaining the environment and focus on one or more supporting facilities to be engaged into the creation and functioning of the ecosystem (networks, desk sharing, incubators, accelerators).

5. Strengthening empowerment and internal capacities for the development and implementation of Social Innovation, mostly through knowledge sharing and capacity building, through training and education programmes.

6. Engage "secondary partners" of specific supporting environments, such as government representatives, institutional and business investors, mentors from different business and social fields.

7. Increase the collective value, using the same resources.

Expected results

- New physical spaces created in building dismissed in peripheral areas
- Raise awareness of the territory on frontier issues related to the digital world and Social Innovation
- New innovative ideas and projects generated
- Knowledge and training skills increased
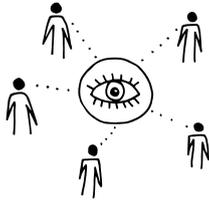
Recommendation 3:

Support social entrepreneurship for increasing social inclusion

In the last EU funding programme period 2014-2020, some interventions on the City of Turin referring to the PON METRO intend to identify new areas of action and innovative projects relating to existing services to combat social exclusion and the progressive increase of hardship and poverty. Through this plan and ERDF, Torino intends to rethink and rationalize the methods of designing and providing services aimed at the most fragile sections of the population by building new methods of systematic interaction between public and private social actors, as well as the local community both during planning and management of interventions, promoting multidimensional and integrated interventions of active inclusion and experiences of community welfare and Social Innovation.

The persistence of the situation of economic and employment crisis in this period has been compounded by Covid-19 crisis with a progressive extension to previously not involved sections of the population, of the condition of precariousness, vulnerability, and real poverty. The simultaneous rooting of conditions marked by severe deprivation and social marginality, associated with demographic changes (aging, loneliness, immigration) are factors that have heavily affected the service system, highlighting the difficulties of sustainability but above all the inadequacy concerning the new needs of citizens. The complexity and heterogeneity of needs imply multidimensional and flexible response systems, characterized by extreme accessibility (physical and cultural), specific and new professional skills and competences able to approach in an integrated way the problems related to the processes of impoverishment, set of tools dedicated for the assessment of needs and the subsequent process of specialist accompanying and support, active participation of the beneficiaries of the interventions and local communities, development of new innovative and sustainable welfare models.

Torino Social Factory (TSF) project constitutes the most recent measure of the Innovation Department of the City of Turin to support Social Innovation projects promoted by the third sector, capable of including society and triggering urban regeneration processes in peripheral areas with high socio-economic criticality. TSF launched to support the development of ideas of social entrepreneurship through an accompanying process and financial support to transform ideas into services, products, and solutions capable of creating economic and social value for the territory and the community. The Municipality, through this call, mainly promoted actions to generate positive impacts in terms of combating new poverty, social vulnerability, unemployment and promoting cultural integration and social cohesion. The project supports social enterprises in the acceleration phase, in change efforts, accompanying them along a path of capacity building in experimenting with new products and new business models, promoting innovation, both on the product side (new services, old services provided with new methods), and on the side of processes (redefinition of the way of concep-

tualizing and dealing with the problems of the peripheries).

The shaping process towards the European Action Plan for the Social Economy that will be approved in the second half of 2021 will be crucial. It is a key document of a new vision of the economic system, a key tool to systematically integrate the social economy in the different socio-economic policies of the European Union, as well as in its actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A plan in which third sector and social impact can play a transformative role and strengthen the capacity to react to crises. The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the strong contribution of the social economy to the well-being of the population, proving to be a fundamental part of the European Protection Network and therefore a pillar of the socio-economic landscape of Europe. At the same time, however, the negative economic impact on businesses and social organizations has been strong and concrete actions are therefore necessary to safeguard this crucial part of the European entrepreneurial fabric, which must be considered a pillar of a new economy that brings social and environmental value.

Challenges
- Simplifying funding and investing in governance
- Enabling and empowering
- Developing a new model of entrepreneurship where social impact is the foundation of the enterprise strategy
- Developing collaborative infrastructures that are widespread throughout the territory that promote participation in the search for solutions for the community's well-being

Axis of cooperation
Axis 2: Develop new employment, occupation models and professional training, fostering inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Actions
1. Use new EU Funds (ReactEurope and Next Generation EU) to launch an open call, the administration allows the construction of open paths that introduce a new concept of services in favour of the population (immigrants, women, self-employed workers), tailored to the real needs of the community

2. Use new EU Funds (ReactEurope and Next Generation EU) to sustain concretely social economy and social entrepreneurship

3. Transform interventions of inclusion, as generators of opportunities for participation and development of relational capital for a significant plurality of subjects

4. Sustain and support public / private partnerships for sharing responsibilities to achieve shared and innovative results

5. Redefine the role of the service offers in local network space, restoring value to a wider audience of economic and social actors

Expected result

- Growth of the social economy sector
- Improvement of skills of social entrepreneurs
- Enhancement of the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups in the labor market
- Mitigation of the negative effects of the Covid-19 crisis
- Strengthening of the response to unemployment (youth and not)
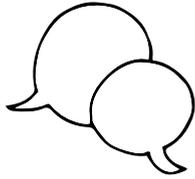
Recommendation 4:

Social cohesion as a driver of territorial development

Locally also Piedmont Region has recently promoted *"WE CARE - WElfare CAntiere REgionale"*, a unitary strategy, co-financed by the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, for Social Innovation in Piedmont.

"We Care" operates on a regional level of integrated policies and involving all public and private actors, was to combine social policies, labour policies and economic development, thinking of social cohesion as a great opportunity for territorial development and growth as a challenge to be achieved through the reduction of social inequalities.

Operationally, the strategy had provided a set of different measures to support Social Innovation, which would be activated with special calls for proposals. The strategy was an expression of the work of an inter-departmental table that had involved the Department of Social, Family and Housing Policies, the Department of Education and Labour, the Department of Productive Activities, Innovation and Research and the Department of Youth Policies, Equal Opportunities, Civil Rights and Immigration. The preliminary study of the strategy was previously entrusted to a working group of about thirty experts on social policy, innovation and development. The group, based on the basis an analysis of national and regional socio-economic conditions and through the deepening of models and good practices in the field of Social Innovation and welfare, had proposed some themes of reflection around which to build the regional strategy: role of governance of the public subject and promotion of subsidiarity; experimentation of new possible ways of empowerment of the person through processes of Social Innovation; sustainability, innovative finance and good practices in the relationship between profit and non-profit; monitoring and measurement of the social impact of services in order to identify effective lines of evaluation; professional updating and training for operators and managers of services.

Challenges

- Intentionally producing positive social impacts
- Simplifying funding and investing in governance
- Develop new economic and labour policies based on social impact
- Develop a new model of entrepreneurship where social impact is the foundation of the enterprise strategy
- Promote interventions in which the centrality is placed on the person and his/her network of relationships rather than the types of services he/she needs
- Realize a generative vision, where those who benefit from services must be placed in a position to establish relationships of reciprocity and co-responsibility with the services themselves and with other citizens
- Adopt the principle of circular subsidiarity in order to commit all the subjects of the territory (public administration, subjects of the economy and civil society) to assume the responsibility of contributing to the common good
- Favour proximity and domiciliary, i.e. the choice to recognize as a unifying focus the person as a whole to promote the emergence, development and enhancement of the potential of each person

Axis of cooperation

Axis 1: Strengthen local communities in the Alpine Space: promote development and livability in rural and mountain areas and promote regeneration processes in urban areas

Actions

1. Create collaborative processes on the territories (districts of social cohesion)

2. Experiment of innovative services - corporate welfare, entrepreneurial initiatives with social impact

3. Experiment initiatives on the territories, understood as systemic actions

4. Activate similar new actions with special calls demonstrating the sustainability of pilot projects modelled in terms of replicability

Expected results

- Improved inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups
- Mitigating negative effects of the Covid-19 crisis
- Strengthened response to unemployment (youth and not)

Outlook Italy

The 4 recommendations are general and partially already followed in Italy with obviously local differences. Certain policy instruments will have greater impact on Social Innovation at specific points in the process. Recognition of the distinct phases of Social Innovation is central to understand which policy will be most suitable; that is, different policies are appropriate for the generation, selection, adoption, and institutionalization processes that any Social Innovation will need to undergo.

In our local context the actions proposed have been addressed for answering challenges with Social Innovation projects, and with important attention paid to their replicability and scalability. This is an essential condition to ensure that Social Innovation achieves the goal of a radical change of the system in a new relationship between public policies, private initiatives, and communities. Scalability, then transferred to the wider scale of the initiative and its achieved results is a decisive step towards increasing new resources, skills, and relationships to ensure that the successes achieved can be extended to new communities.

In the whole context the Covid-19 pandemic has radically changed the reference socio-economic context highlighting the importance of supporting resilient communities, the acceleration of the digital transition (and therefore the need to increase skills in this sector) as drivers of sustainable development and the urgency of rethinking the distribution chain of goods and the importance of social and cultural infrastructure and public spaces as a place where the functions of community proximity and exchange of relations can be carried out.

2.4 Germany

The land of Baden-Wüerttemberg is amongst Germany's most innovative regions, with a diverse ecosystem of technology hubs, strong SMEs and startups. Also, with 12,3% of social enterprises located in this region, Baden-Wüerttemberg comes in third on a national level.[2] However, despite a strength in the technological field and some best practice examples, Social Innovation is still in many cases a product of chance or particular involvement of certain actors.

A study on Social Innovation in Baden-Wüerttemberg carried out by the Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum, the Centre for Social Investment (CSI) of the University of Heidelberg and the Ministry for Labour, Economics and Housing Baden-Wüerttemberg in 2018 examined the economic and technological relevance of Social Innovations in the region of Baden-Wüerttemberg. The analysed Social Innovations in Baden-Wüerttemberg mainly responded to societal challenges in six different fields of action: health (including ambient assisted living), sharing economy and makers community, consumer awareness, work integration and inclusion, competence sharing and cooperation of the private and public sector as well as improving living conditions in rural areas.

The study found that despite a multitude of initiatives that can be classified as Social Innovations, many societal challenges remain without satisfactory solutions. Whilst many initiatives are promising starting points to solving a social issue, most societal challenges have not been solved in its entirety. Thus, there is still a lot of potential for new solutions as well as for the further development of existing solutions. A second finding of the study was that suggestions for such Social Innovations are mostly made by civil society organisations, but ideas are often not further developed and therefore rarely reach commercialization. Only few economic actors are involved in Social Innovations, while most social initiatives by economic actors take place in the realm of corporate social responsibility strategies (CSR). Moreover, the market potential of Social Innovations is not well known as social acceptance still seems to be low. Synergies between actors from civil society and the business community remain mostly unexploited. Social innovators and companies remain isolated from each other and often cannot find suitable support, partners or investors.

However, the study also identified factors that were crucial for the success of Social Innovations in Baden-Wüerttemberg, e.g. the cooperation of actors from different sectors who had not been cooperating before and a secure financial basis in the development and growth phases of the product or service. Effective cooperation of economic and social institutions, public awareness for certain

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[2] Social Entrepreneurship Netzwerk Deutschland e.V. (SEND), Deutscher Social Entrepreneurship Monitor 2019 (2019), *www.send-ev.de/uploads/DSEM2019.pdf*.

social issues and customer acquisition when the Social Innovation has entered the market are also named as essential for the success of a Social Innovation.[3]

The following recommendations to support the identified success factors of Social Innovation in Baden-Wüerttemberg have been developed in a multi-step approach involving stakeholders from different fields. A particular focus was put on the potential transferability of best practice examples from one level to another as well as from a Covid-19 to a post-pandemic context.

Recommendation 1:
Strengthening social entrepreneurship from the ground up

The land of Baden-Wüerttemberg as a highly innovative region has a variety of funding opportunities for innovative companies, especially targeted at start-ups. Different funding programmes are available to start-ups on a federal, regional and local level. Higher education institutions also offer a variety of support programmes, reaching from funding to consultation for potential founders.

With several support programmes for social start-ups and social enterprises in general – ranging from coworking spaces to consultancy and accelerator programmes – parts of Baden-Wüerttemberg have a more developed social economy ecosystem than others. Major contact points for social entrepreneurship in Baden-Württemberg are located in Stuttgart and Freiburg. In Freiburg the "Grünhof" has to be mentioned as an important incubator for social entrepreneurship. Social Entrepreneurship BW – located in Stuttgart – is an important network and competence center for social entrepreneurship which aims to connect members, support with its expertise and raise awareness for social entrepreneurship and its issues in Baden-Württemberg. Social Impact Lab – also located in Stuttgart - develops products and services that secure the future viability and social equity in the region. The NGO provides expert start-up consultancy as well as a scope for co-working, networking and events and has won several awards (e.g. from the EU, the OECD and Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy). Despite pioneer activities in regions like Mannheim, Stuttgart or Freiburg, the land still faces the same basic challenges as the rest of Germany.

Challenges
Social entrepreneurs still face very basic challenges, one being the relatively low awareness of social entrepreneurship as a concept in the general public and in politics which results in high administrative hurdles and low accessibility of funding programmes.

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[3] Victoria Blessing, Sarah Mortimer, Ute Bongertz, Georg Mildenberger, Jonathan Loeffler, Neue Technologien und soziale Innovationen. Europäische Forschungsstudie über private und öffentliche Initiativen (Stuttgart: Steinbeis-Edition, 2018).

Social entrepreneurs have specific characteristics and therefore specific needs when it comes to consultancy, particularly start-ups consultancy. Impact and business models of social enterprises have to be interlinked, and societal impact being their key selling point has a great influence on marketing and communication strategies. For many social entrepreneurs, the complexity of the interlocking of business and impact model continues in other areas as well. In the German Social Entrepreneurship Monitor 2019, 16% of participants stated that they use two legal forms. This hybrid structure results from the interface between business and non-profit status, at which many social entrepreneurs operate. The non-existence of one distinct legal form for social enterprises in Germany and the above-mentioned mixture of commercial and non-profit status not only increases the internal administrative burden for social entrepreneurs, but also makes them less likely to access general funding programmes. 43% of social entrepreneurs stated that they didn't access any funding program, while more than 50% benefitted from funding programmes specifically designed for them. Only 5% benefitted from general funding programmes which underlines the difficulty social enterprises have to access those funds.[4] Many financing instruments focus on only one of the two legal forms and make fundraising within a hybrid structure more difficult. The often comparatively lower profit margins and slower growth curves (or the conscious intention to refrain from further growth beyond a certain point) not only prolong the time until the company can finance itself completely from its own resources, but may also make it more difficult to find seed capital. Some banks are still hesitant about the innovative approach of a foundation as well as the orientation towards the common good.[5]

Actions

In order to improve the support for social enterprises in Baden-Wüerttemberg, actions in three realms are proposed: on a political level, the framework conditions for social enterprises need to be enhanced, the funding programmes themselves should be tackled and the support services for social entrepreneurs have to be expanded.

a) **Political framework conditions:**

1. Elaboration of a regional strategy to support social enterprises, based on a regional analysis

2. Creation of a "Social enterprise" category in the enterprise register or databank of the Baden-Württemberg Chamber of Commerce and Industry

b) **Funding programmes:**

3. Revision of existing funding programmes for start-ups and SMEs with regards to the openness to social enterprises: increase flexibility of conditions for beneficiaries, accepted legal forms, business models and performance

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[4] Social Entrepreneurship Netzwerk Deutschland e.V. (SEND), Deutscher Social Entrepreneurship Monitor 2019 (2019), *www.send-ev.de/uploads/DSEM2019.pdf*.

[5] Social Entrepreneurship Netzwerk Deutschland e.V., Social Entrepreneurs effektiv födern und unterstützen (August 2020), *www.send-ev.de/uploads/social_entrepreneurs_effektiv_unterstuetzen.pdf*.

indicators

4. Expansion of existing and creation of new funding programmes targeted specifically at social enterprises and social start-ups, funded by regional or local authorities as well as by Higher Education Institutions

c) **Support services for social entrepreneurs:**

5. Support of existing contact and information points for social entrepreneurs which offer consultancy and training for them

6. Creation of specific contact points for social entrepreneurs at Higher Education Institutions

7. Training of start-up coaches and funding consultants on the specific needs of social entrepreneurs and funding opportunities

Expected results

• Improvement of framework conditions and regional political strategy for support of social enterprises

• Increased flexibility of general and start-up funding programmes by expanding the programme to social enterprises and thus better access to those programmes for social entrepreneurs

• Wider support for and broader offer of specific social entrepreneurship support programmes

• More information points for social entrepreneurs with targeted support and consultancy services, particularly for social entrepreneurs in a Higher Education context

• Increased awareness of social entrepreneurship, their specific characteristics, needs and funding opportunities amongst start-up coaches and funding consultants
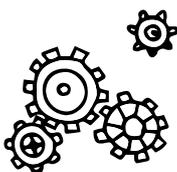
Recommendation 2:

Local crowdfunding as alternative financing instruments for Social Innovation projects

Crowdfunding is a relatively new concept that has become increasingly popular, in particular to support new companies or individuals to launch new products and help artists to implement projects in different artistic fields. For social enterprises, crowdfunding as fundraising is more common than for other companies, not only for financial reasons, but also to raise awareness of the organization and build a community of supporters. This model is increasingly promoted by local cooperative banks.[6]

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[6] Social Entrepreneurship Netzwerk Deutschland e.V., Social Entrepreneurs effektiv födern und unterstützen (August 2020), https://www.send-ev.de/uploads/social_entrepreneurs_effektiv_unterstuetzen.pdf.

However, it is also possible to fund other initiatives or social projects through crowdfunding that do not originate in (social) enterprises and therefore lack the organisational structure and means. Research indicates that a secure financial basis is particularly crucial to Social Innovation initiatives, from the start of the project throughout development and growth phases. Public-private partnships to guarantee funding are regarded as a beneficial means. In crowdfunding, public authorities or private companies can also get involved and add additional support to successfully financed projects.

Besides internationally well-known crowdfunding platforms like kickstarter.com, there are a multitude of national and regional as well as topic-specific crowdfunding platforms in Germany, some of which have a focus on Social Innovation initiatives or social enterprises. *Startnext* is the biggest German crowdfunding platform which offers artists, creators, inventors or social entrepreneurs the opportunity to present their projects and set up a campaign. Certified with the B Corporation Certification[7], Startnext focuses on sustainability and societal impact.

On a regional level, the platform *bw crowd* offers crowdfunding for social projects from Baden-Wüerttemberg. For all projects reaching their support threshold on bw crowd, Baden-Wüerttembergische Bank provides additional financing from a funding pot. *place2help Rhein-Main* offers an online platform which bundles crowdfunding projects from various platforms and makes them visible in the Rhein-Main region. Those projects meeting the criteria receive additional funding from a regional fund. Similar concepts have been carried out on a local level, often with additional funding provided by municipal utilities companies or private companies.

Challenges

Ensuring funding of Social Innovation initiatives remains an issue, particularly in rural areas where the variety of actors potentially involved in financing is smaller than in urban areas. However, the need for innovative solutions for societal challenges is equally existent if not bigger in rural areas when all factors like rural depopulation and aging societies are taken into account. Particularly Social Innovation initiatives that do not originate from (social) enterprises have a financing disadvantage since they often don't qualify for traditional funding instruments due to alternative organisational forms, non-profit orientation or other reasons.

Crowdfunding seems to be well-established in the creative industry and in the start-up ecosystem, and is even on the rise amongst social enterprises. As a financing instrument, it is underdeveloped or less well-known for other kinds of initiatives as well as in a local context despite its innovativeness with regards to

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[6] Social Entrepreneurship Netzwerk Deutschland e.V., Social Entrepreneurs effektiv födern und unterstützen (August 2020), https://www.send-ev.de/uploads/social_entrepreneurs_effektiv_unterstuetzen.pdf.
[7] https://bcorporation.net/

its participatory aspects and potential for public-private partnerships. Also, projects need a good social media marketing strategy in order to get the support they need which favours projects by established companies with existing marketing structures and means. For this reason, initiatives with a high potential for societal impact often receive lower interest.

Actions

1. Establish and/or extend crowdfunding for Social Innovations on a local level. This can be done by creating a new platform / initiative on a municipal / local level or by utilizing existing platforms.

2. Involve private companies / public authorities / associations to offer additional support to successful projects (additional funds, support in marketing etc.).

3. Engage citizens in the support and selection process, particularly by promoting the platform and local crowdfunding as an instrument in general. The Covid-19 crisis can serve as a starting point since it has raised the public's awareness of the need for innovative solutions to societal challenges and the willingness to support initiatives on a local level.

4. Train potential beneficiaries in navigating the crowdfunding instrument: how to effectively promote the project / initiative on the platform and market it on social media.

Expected results

• Awareness for crowdfunding as a financing instrument for Social Innovation initiatives, particularly on a local level

• More crowdfunding opportunities on a regional and local level, particularly for Social Innovation projects outside the corporate world

• Involvement of different actors on a local level to support Social Innovation projects, establishing public-private partnerships for the financial support of crowdfunding

• Extended use of crowdfunding to finance Social Innovation project ideas

• Training opportunities for potential beneficiaries on marketing of Social Innovation project ideas
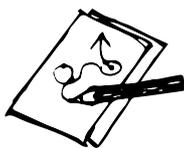
Recommendation 3:

Public procurement regulations to enable procurement of innovative solutions

For Social Innovations to be sustainable and profitable, customer acquisition is crucial when the Social Innovation has entered the market. As in the EU, 14% of GDP is spent on the public procurement of goods and services, public bodies represent a significant group of potential customers that could at the same time foster Social Innovations addressing social issues. However, currently social

enterprises in Germany make the most profit from selling their products and services to private individuals or other (for-profit) companies, while only about 40% of them sell to public authorities on a regional or local level.[8] Therefore, in public bodies purchasing products and services from social enterprises and thus supporting Social Innovations still lies great unexploited potential.

Due to German federalism, public procurement is highly decentralised and not regulated by one specific legislation, public authorities and private tenderers rather have to observe a multitude of national, regional and European regulations. Public procurement law enables public procurement agencies since mid-2016 to include sustainability and other criteria in public procurement activities. For tenders above EU threshold values, the National German law on public procurement generally stipulates that besides price or costs, qualitative, environmental and social criteria can also be considered.[9] In several areas there are additional regulations under regional law which must be observed when awarding public contracts. Below the EU threshold values, the regional regulation on public procurement of the land Baden-Wüerttemberg specifies that sustainable aspects shall be taken into account insofar as it is possible and appropriate at reasonable expense and insofar as there is a factual connection with the subject of the contract.[10] This includes the possibility of defining selection criteria with regards to social aspects (support of social integration and equality and consideration of the core labor standards) and environmental aspects (energy efficiency and climate protection, noise protection and air pollution control, special regulations for food and paper products).

When it comes to public procurement in practice however, public bodies have to navigate between a limited budget, sustainable and social criteria and a certain hesitance towards restricting the competition, which results in a discrepancy between legal possibilities and common practice in public procurement. Also, no statistical data is available yet on the sustainable criteria used in public procurement and exchange of experience between different public bodies is still based on personal contacts and good will. There have been information campaigns on sustainable procurement on a national level in the past and sustainable procurement is mentioned as one minor point in the sustainability strategy of the land Baden-Wüerttemberg. However, being a transversal topic often overlooked, there still seems to be a low awareness of the potential impact that public procurement could have in supporting Social Innovation. Public procurement agencies should be encouraged to increase innovative and sustainable procurement for the benefit of social enterprises as well as the stimulation of innovative technologies, products and services in general.

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[8]Social Entrepreneurship Netzwerk Deutschland e.V. (SEND), Deutscher Social Entrepreneurship Monitor 2019 (2019), https://www.send-ev.de/uploads/DSEM2019.pdf.

[9]§ 58 VgV (Verordnung über die Vergabe öffentlicher Aufträge).

[10]§ 10 Abs. 3 VwV Beschaffung (Verwaltungsvorschrift der Landesregierung über die Vergabe öffentlicher Aufträge).

Actions

1. Analyse social and sustainable criteria used in public procurement on a regional level

2. Develop municipal or local sustainability strategies that include guidelines for sustainable procurement in order to raise awareness for the opportunities of public procurement and to shape common practice in public bodies

3. Include the topic of sustainable procurement in the interministerial working group on public procurement and other interagency working groups on a regional level

4. Establish exchange of good practices between different authorities and agencies by creating interagency working groups on public procurement and the joint creation of guidelines

5. Train procurement managers / responsible staff within public authorities and sensitize them for the topic of fostering Social Innovation through procurement. They should raise awareness of the possibilities of public procurement and what public institutions can do to take their share.

6. Public authorities should also be encouraged to cooperate with external actors in order to make their services more innovative and potentially create new Social Innovations (an example could be a delivery service for certain documents by bike messengers which reduces the waiting time at public institutions for citizens, creates new staff capacities and contributes to a more sustainable infrastructure).

Expected results

• Statistical data on sustainable and social procurement and best practice examples in order to analyse the state-of-the-art

• Rethinking of the procurement practice within public institutions through guidelines on local level, institutionalized exchange of good practices and raising of awareness about Social Innovation

• Higher awareness of the role public procurement can play in fostering Social Innovation and supporting social enterprises amongst procurement managers

• Enabling innovative and sustainable procurement from social enterprises and other sources, foster Social Innovations through public procurement
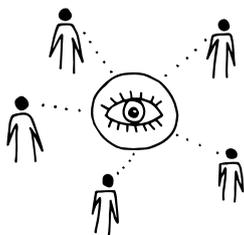
Recommendation 4:

Combining competitions for Social Innovations on regional or local level with a participatory approach

Social Innovations highly benefit from a close cooperation of actors from different fields in order to address the most pressing societal needs. However, research has shown that necessary networks and collaborations are often a product of chance more than controlled processes. Moreover, innovation support is mostly available through funding programmes for start-ups which are tied to certain

business models and organisational forms, which in consequence excludes social initiatives by alternative organisational forms.

In the light of the Covid-19 crisis, the German Federal Government launched two initiatives supporting Social Innovation which could be transferred accordingly to a regional or municipal level addressing the respective societal challenges. In March 2020, the Federal Government organized a digital hackathon under the hashtag #WIRVSVIRUS (we vs virus) to develop solutions for the most pressing issues of the pandemic situation. With over 28,000 participants proposing 1,500 ideas on how to combat the pandemic, the event was a big success and directly responded to a societal demand of finding solutions in a participatory way. Leading up to the event, the public could vote on the most pressing challenges and collect which societal problems the participants should focus on. An implementation programme in the wake of the hackathon supports the fast implementation and development of the ideas and is characterized by a close cooperation between public administration, civil society and economic actors.

A similar concept was organized on a regional level by the PARITÄTische Wohlfahrtsverband Landesverband Baden-Württemberg e.V., the regional branch of the Association of Voluntary Welfare Organizations, under the title "CARE-hacktCORONA" (care hacks Corona). This digital hackathon for the social economy brought 300 experts together who worked on over 50 problems and developed 21 solutions.

In May 2020, the Federal Ministry for Education and Research launched the competition "Gesellschaft der Ideen" (society of ideas), a competition for Social Innovation ideas. Applicants could propose concepts for addressing societal challenges of which the best ideas are selected to be further developed in a 3-step programme. The competition was not limited to any organisational form or any specific topic, the general public was also involved in the selection of the best proposed ideas by the means of a public consultation. 30 projects were selected in a first step to further conceptualize their ideas within a period of 6 months. 10 projects will be chosen for a 2-years testing phase during which the ideas can be further developed and scientifically backed. In the last step, five project teams will get the opportunity to fully implement their projects, supported by scientific, technical and financial means.

Actions

According to the best practice examples on the federal (and regional) level, Social Innovation competitions or challenge events could be initiated on a regional or local level. The local level is particularly suitable for a Social Innovation competition event since societal challenges are well-known to the inhabitants which increases the involvement of the public in the definition of the challenge, the participation in the competition itself as well as the selection of suitable solutions.

The concept of the competition should include a participatory approach, appropriate methods as well as a certain flexibility in order to support project ideas that are not eligible for "classical" innovation funding. Prior to the competition,

the public should be able to propose and vote on the most pressing societal issues to be addressed by the competition in the respective area. Hackathon-style events or events using agile methods allow the cooperation of different actors and the development of new, innovative concepts and ideas. The best ideas should also be selected in a participatory approach and support should be made available to the winning solutions, through funding, mentoring programmes or alternative measures. Public-private partnerships, e.g. of public authorities, associations, companies and civil society actors are also beneficial to this kind of initiative.

Expected results

- Involvement of the public in the identification of social issues to be addressed by Social Innovation in a regional / local context

- Organisation and establishment of local or regional Social Innovation competitions, further support for winning ideas and initiatives through an implementation programme

- Better cooperation between different actors, especially between economic and social actors

- Funding and support of Social Innovation initiatives not depending on the organisational form of the initiative, also including projects that are not initiated by a company, that specifically answer societal challenges in a local context.

Outlook Germany

Baden-Württemberg as one of Germany's most innovative regions should also take a pioneering role when it comes to supporting Social Innovation. Despite an already quite open understanding of what innovation can mean and promising individual best practice examples in the realm of Social Innovation, the region still has much unexploited potential with regards to finding solutions to societal challenges and supporting these initiatives.

The recommendations given above shall contribute to expanding the awareness about Social Innovation within the region, in particular in public authorities, and potentially foster new forms of cooperation to support Social Innovation initiatives. They were developed in a Covid-19 context in close cooperation with stakeholders from different areas and are thus in part inspired by some impressive and creative new approaches from public institutions as well as from normal citizens in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is important to stress that while strengthening the social entrepreneurship ecosystem is crucial for several reasons, it is not only through social enterprises that Social Innovation is promoted. Other forms of initiatives and projects can also produce significant social impact, which is why support for Social Innovation initiatives should entail a higher flexibility with regards to characteristics of potential beneficiaries. Like Social Innovation itself, support for Social Innovation initiatives should be of an innovative nature with the main goal of solving societal challenges.

2.5 Slovenia

We used a bottom-up approach and a democratic cooperation process to co-create and formulate new recommendations of public policies on a local and regional level to better support Social Innovation. We organized several workshops and consultations with local stakeholders, online as well as office (while it was still possible). During these workshops and discussions, we identified fields of interest that we wanted to explore and elaborate on further. That is when we also included external experts to the process, who helped us develop policy suggestions further.

The aim was to map and identify already working policies, as well as to find new solutions to our specific needs. On top of specific Slovene circumstances, there arose new challenges with Covid-19 situation (SME related challenges, schools and children, the elderly, healthcare system and the like). A genuine need for recommendations on how to faster and better implement ideas of Social Innovation by the public sector and society at large is very present.

We hope and wish innovation practices we describe below become a norm and Social Innovation will be the answer to global challenges. To make a clearer case, we list actions and expected results with each recommendation as best as we can. We link the recommendations to one of the three axes of cooperation that were developed in previous ASIS deliverables to connect the challenges to the Alpine Region.
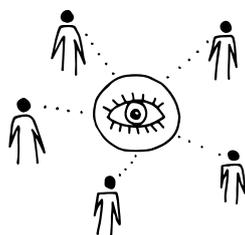
Recommendation 1:

Social Innovation ecosystem mapping and monitoring - Statistical and analytical data collection of Social Innovation sector

In Slovenia there is a lack of mapping and monitoring of actors in the Social Innovation sector on multiple levels – not only their existence, but also their activities, value creation, social impact achieved, as well as their economic stability and performance. Therefore, we believe this is a key measure for the development of the Social Innovation sector in Slovenia, as there is currently no possibility of determining baseline values, monitoring criteria, performance criteria, etc. for the Social Innovation sector, so that strategies, measures and evaluations can be designed appropriately. Once companies create value, this value needs to be measured, the same applies to the social impact they achieve – it needs to be measured. Key measure for the development of Social Innovation should be to identify potential areas / domains relevant for Social Innovation.

Challenges

It is perceived that the concept of Social Innovation is not sufficiently recognizable in the public sector. Consequently, the importance of Social Innovation is not recognized in the general public as well, and at the same time not enough

individual pre-existing Social Innovations are identified. It is widely accepted that Social Innovation should be more promoted and interconnected with other sectors. To address these challenges, a set of indicators from existing bases shall be defined as relevant. It would contribute to higher quality of statistics and measurements.

Axis of cooperation

Axis 2: Develop new employment, occupation models and professional training

Actions

1. Coordinated monitoring of statistics for all groups of Social Innovation actors and the social economy sector

2. Prepared annual reports for all groups of subjects of Social Innovation and social economy

3. New records of social economy entities at the ministry level

4. Provision of staff with contractors (SURS – national statistical office and AJPES - Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services)

5. Designing the parameters of statistical and analytical monitoring of the sector

6. Carrying out pilot monitoring and analysis

7. Should be funded by the Ministry of Economy

Expected results

• Comprehensive Social Innovation sector monitoring and measurement system

• New record system at the ministry level

• Defining appropriate indicators, relevant for measurement of Social Innovation

Recommendation 2:

Create and implement a methodology to measure social impact

There is no methodology to measure social impact on national level. The preparation of the methodology is demanding, so it would be good to give priority to the consortium over the independent contractor, to require excellent references of the consortium, and to carry out the public procurement. This process needs sufficient time to be implemented.

Challenges

There have been attempts form certain local institutions and actors to bring to light a certain social impact measuring tool, e.g.:

1. IRDO Institute in Maribor

2. SocioLab in Ptuj

3. Fund 05 in Kranj

4. ETRI skupnost in Ljubljana

But there has been no national guideline or specific instruction or instrument in place to tackle this issue on national and cross sectoral level. The challenge is certainly funding and lack of political will to put in place such a tool, since the follow up would have to be an institutional change and support of the Social Innovation ecosystem on all levels. We have information from our experts that existing regulation on methodology framework shall be upgraded with concrete elements from this framework, but we have seen no movement on ministry level. Even more, there has been a more than two year gap in the formation of a special council for social economy in the Ministry of Economy.

Axis of cooperation

Axis 2: Develop new employment, occupation models and professional training

Actions

1. Develop a methodology for measuring social impact

2. Develop a system for training Social Innovation stakeholders and public administration officials on measuring social impact.

3. Implement public procurement for the preparation of methodology for measuring social impact and the implementation of training workshops for Social Innovation stakeholders on measuring social impact

4. Should be funded by the Ministry of Economy (min. 50.000 €)

Expected results

· Methodology in place for measuring social impact

· Trained individuals (Social Innovation actors and public administration) for conducting Social Innovation measurements

· Yearly increase of the companies measuring social impact within their organizations by 5%

Social Innovation academy for public actors – creating Social Innovation ambassadors in public administration and creation of competence centres for Social Innovation

Due to the lack of trust in and respect for Social Innovation, it happens that the social environment in Slovenia in many cases does not accept but rather rejects social entrepreneurs as «strange», which is reflected not only on an informal level, but also e.g. in the case of smaller opportunities for obtaining funds from banks (lending and other financial mechanisms), the unequal position of social enterprises in comparison to different organizational forms, etc.

It is crucial to be aware that with small procedural improvements with a minimal financial investment, we can make a significant contribution to better conditions for the development of social entrepreneurship and Social Innovation sectors. For example, the problem of the impossibility of entering cooperatives in the register of voluntary organizations, which could be eliminated by procedural improvement or minimal changes in the rules at the internal levels of ministry bodies.

One of the objectives of this measure is to improve and harmonize professional standards in the field of social entrepreneurship & Social Innovation. Development centres must prepare professional standards for their social entrepreneurship areas and submit them to the ministry as one of the project results.

Currently, the terms "social" and "societal innovation" are used as synonyms, which introduces confusion into the field, as the term "societal" traditionally has a different meaning and connotation than "social". The need for harmonization is reflected in all areas and levels that come into contact with social / societal innovations, starting with the state level, legal regulations, etc.

There is a need to unify the definition of the concept of Social Innovation, because on the one hand it is "all Social Innovation" or wants to classify as Social Innovation also innovations that are not, and at the same time innovators who could perceive themselves as social innovators, do not perceive this, as the concept of Social Innovation is insufficiently recognizable. We believe involved institutions should be: all ministries, SURS (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia), AJPES (Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services), UMAR (Institute for macroeconomic Analysis and Development), administrative units (associations for registration of associations and others), SPIRIT Slovenia (Public Agency for Entrepreneurship, Internationalization, Foreign Investments and Technology), SPS (Slovene Enterprise Fund), SRRS (Slovenian Regional Development Fund), associations of municipalities and urban municipalities, ESS (Employment Service of Slovenia), Centers for Social Work, Regional development agencies and other social entrepreneurship stakeholders in the public sector.

Challenges

The most pressing current challenges, arising directly from the problems and addressing directly the needs described above, have been summarized in two sets:

1. How to increase the visibility of Social Innovation?

2. How to combine knowledge to achieve critical mass for the implementation and breakthrough of Social Innovation?

The first part covers the issues of recognizing that we create Social Innovations, through harmonization of terminology, unification of concepts, increasing the visibility of concepts and existing good practices, as well as establishing dividing lines between social and other innovations, which should be subject to subsequent systematic and meaningful consideration.

To answer the second question, we believe there is a need to connect different actors, to create a cross-border network and to systematically connect knowledge and experience to make it available to everyone, without every innovator or the actor himself exploring available resources. We can do that by ensuring harmonization of terminology, establishing mechanisms for Social Innovation visibility and developing a strategy for connecting Social Innovation, knowledge and competencies.

Axis of cooperation

Axis 2: Develop new employment, occupation models and professional training

Actions

1. Informing stakeholders in the public sector about Social Innovation

2. Motivating public sector stakeholders to contribute to improving the conditions for Social Innovation development

3. Procedural improvements for social entrepreneurship entities working on Social Innovation projects and initiatives

4. Preparation of information materials

5. Implementation of information visits, meetings, trainings

6. Collecting identified possible processes and procedural improvements for Social Innovation stakeholders

7. Should be funded by ERDF or Government funded

Expected results:

• Establishing competence centres for Social Innovation (min. 5 – Ljubljana, Maribor, Celje, Murska Sobota, Postojna / Koper)

• 10 training sessions conducted (Social Innovation academy for public actors)

• 200 informed individuals in the public sector – so called Social Innovation ambassadors

• Additional informed individuals in the financial and economy sector, re-

search and education institutions, business support institutions
- Digital inclusion, digital competences, digital literacy, decentralized digital network platform
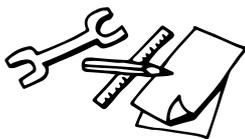
There is a lack of support organizations that deal with social entrepreneurship initiatives and start-ups in Slovenia. Very few supporting institutions and incubators are focused on this sector. No national consortium to guide and strategize the ecosystem or to support social entrepreneurship with technical support and other competences. There is a lack of funding options for social entrepreneurship initiatives and start-ups on local, regional, and national levels.

There is currently no social entrepreneurship system support. Representatives of the support environment are unconnected to each other and cannot provide comprehensive support. It would be necessary to identify existing holders of knowledge and skills (individuals, NGOs, social enterprises, creatives, craftsmen...), which would be included in the support environment and especially in the knowledge spaces. «Spaces» of knowledge should be built from the bottom up - not physical spaces, especially communities. Communities must not remain closed, but there is a need to connect them across their own borders and to change them into movements and initiatives.

Challenges

- Lack of supportive environment for social enterprises
- Limited access to resources (one-off calls)
- When there are tenders, it is difficult to compete or apply for the tender and be successful
- The conditions of the tenders are not in favor of smaller companies, there are no appropriate tenders to support social enterprises, start-up entrepreneurs
- In the first phase of a company's development, repayment is not an appropriate mechanism
- Some municipalities offer their premises with a rental subsidy
- The challenge: to offer an appropriate supportive environment and financial support for social enterprises and to support the development of Social Innovation

Axis of cooperation

Axis 1: Strengthen local communities in alps regions: promote development and livability in rural and mountain areas and promote regeneration in urban areas

Actions

1. Networking and cooperation of individuals and organizations with the aim of developing Social Innovations and creating social entrepreneurial ideas and solutions through workshops, events, discussions aimed at creating new solutions and responses to the challenges we face in local environments

2. Building and strengthening competencies for starting start-ups of social entrepreneurial enterprises and their employees - development and organization of appropriate education and training for social entrepreneurship, professional counseling, coaching, and mentoring for the start-up, operation, and growth of social enterprises

3. Development of financial schemes and assistance in accessing financial resources

4. Administrative-technical and marketing support and other services

5. Development of competencies of support organizations

6. Meetings and networking

7. Transfer of good practices and sharing of common issues

8. Provide technical support to start-ups and incorporation of Social Innovation initiatives; strengthen professional standards in the Social Innovation sector (training of experts)
Should be funded by ERDF or Government funded

Expected results:

• Support provided to 100 social entrepreneurship entities and Social Innovation initiatives

• 5 active professional support programmes

• An operating national network in the social entrepreneurship sector

• Involvement in 5 international networks

• 10 qualified social entrepreneurship and Social Innovation experts

Outlook Slovenia

There is a long way to go, but we have great neighbours and are aware of good practice examples from abroad that we can implement ourselves. In general, weak political will to implement measures and policies to strengthen Social Innovation can be noted. On the other hand, we do have a very strong ICT and technology ecosystems as well as business incubators and technology park network that we can use as resources or support in building up the Social Innovation support ecosystem. Regional development agencies are local administration support organizations that will need to be involved in the process of building up a Social Innovation ecosystem. For this reason, the formulated recommendations you read about above refer to the development and maintenance of networks, capacity building and the creation of awareness to increase acceptance in various stakeholder groups.

3. Conclusion

This country specific public policy guide presents conclusions from workshops and discussions that each consortium partner conducted in its respective territory. We attempt to suggest public policies, instruments and tools that lead to the expected results as described and therefore have a positive impact on the social and economic challenges we identified in each specific region (country). For each of the identified challenges we believe the main and common issue that needs to be tackled first is a better developed Social Innovation ecosystem that uses a new vision of innovation (Social Innovation).

We can observe different circumstances in each project partner's respective Alpine Region, which results in recommendations that are quite specific for each of them. Certain policy instruments will have greater impact on Social Innovation at specific points in the process. Recognition of the distinct phases of Social Innovation is central to understanding which policy will be most suitable; that is, different policies are appropriate for the generation, selection, adoption, and institutionalization processes that any Social Innovation will need to undergo.

Scalability and transferability are the processes we would stress to any reader of this document. Find motivation or inspiration from this document to implement a similar policy in your area of work. Social innovators are in need for supporting public policies to be able to disseminate their good practices to a large scale and tackle societal and environmental issues the world is facing today. Another challenge is to also widen the ecosystem of Social Innovation and to engage traditional technolgical innovation players.

The Covid-19 pandemic has radically changed the reference socio-economic context, highlighting the importance of supporting resilient communities and the acceleration of digital transition (and therefore the need to increase skills in this sector) as drivers of sustainable development. It also emphasizes the urgency of rethinking the distribution chain of goods and the importance of social and cultural infrastructures and public spaces as places where the functions of community proximity and exchange of relations can be carried out.

In general, an increased political will to implement measures and policies to strengthen Social Innovation can be noted. Nonetheless, especially in the local context, increased strategic support is needed to create beneficial conditions in which a further development of the concept can take place and socially innovative projects, initiatives and business endeavours can strive.